

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PRETOR 04566 081714Z
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INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY GABORONE
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L PRETORIA 4566

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3
TAGS: PORG, WA, SF
SUBJECT: NAMIBIA: VAN HEERDEN DISCUSSES EVENTS

1. PRIME MINISTER BOTHA'S AIDE, NEIL VAN HEERDEN, TOLD POLITICAL COUNSELOR TAYLOR TODAY, AUGUST 8, THAT THE SOUTH AFRICAN MILITARY WAS DISTURBED ABOUT THE SITUATION ON THE OVAMBO-ANGOLAN BORDER. THE CONCERN, HE SAID, WAS NOT JUST WITH THE RECENT RESUMPTION OF LOW-LEVEL TERRORIST ACTIVITY BY SWAPO. VAN HEERDEN SAID HE HAD SAT IN ON A CONFERENCE LAST WEEK WHICH HAD REVIEWED INTELLIGENCE REPORTS OF A BUILD UP ON THE ANGOLAN SIDE OF THE BORDER OF SWAPO AND MPLA FORCES SUPPORTED LOGISTICALLY BY CUBAN UNITS. THE SAG, VAN HEERDEN SAID, BELIEVES THAT SWAPO'S INTENTION IS TO MOVE ACROSS THE BORDER ONCE THE SECURITY COUNCIL GIVES THE FINAL APPROVAL TO
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 PRETOR 04566 081714Z

THE WESTERN PROPOSAL AND TO SET UP BASES INSIDE OVAMBO. SWAPO WOULD THEN PROPOSE TO CONFINE SOME OF ITS MILITARY FORCES IN THESE BASES. THE MILITARY, HE SAID, WOULD FIND ANY SUCH MOVE INTOLERABLE. "THE HAWKS ARE READY TO GO" VAN HEERDEN ASSERTED, IMPLYING THAT THEY WISH TO MOVE WITH PREEMPTIVE STRIKES AGAINST THE NEW SWAPO CONCENTRATIONS ON THE ANGOLAN SIDE OF THE BORDER.

2. TAYLOR WARNED THAT ANY SUCH ACTION AT THIS TIME COULD NOT BE JUSTIFIED AND HE POINTED TO THE ARTICLE IN THE "CITIZEN" THIS MORNING (PRETORIA 4565) WHICH REPORTED THAT THE SAG RECOGNIZED THAT SWAPO MIGHT BE SEEKING TO PROVOKE A SOUTH AFRICAN RAID. VAN HEERDEN ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THIS COULD BE PART OF THEIR OBJECTIVE.

3. VAN HEERDEN SAID THAT THE DFA HAD RECEIVED A REPORT FROM THE AG'S ASSISTANT, JOHN VIALI, OF THE FIRST DAY'S MEETING BETWEEN STEYN AND AHTISAARI. THE SESSION HAD GONE OFF VERY WELL, HE SAID, BUT HE NOTED THAT STEYN HAD DONE MOST OF THE TALKING AND AHTISAARI HAD MADE FEW COMMENTS. STEYN HAD OUTLINED TO AHTISAARI THE OBJECTIVES AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY BEHIND HIS OWN MISSION IN NAMIBIA, WHAT HE HAD ACCOMPLISHED SO FAR, AND WHAT HE FORESEES OVER THE NEXT FEW MONTHS. ACCORDING TO VAN HEERDEN, STEYN NOTED THAT THERE WERE THREE MAIN AREAS OF CONCERN: 1) COMPLETING THE REGISTRATION CAMPAIGN; 2) SETTING THE DATE FOR ELECTIONS AND CARRYING THEM OUT AND; 3) MAINTAINING SECURITY.

4. VAN HEERDEN SAID THAT STEYN HAD EXPLAINED HIS PROCLAMATION ON THE REGISTRATION OF VOTERS AND HOW IT WAS BASED ON PREVIOUS UN-CONDUCTED PLEBISCITES. STEYN REPORTEDLY SAID HE WOULD BE PREPARED TO EXPAND OR AMEND THE PROCEDURES, BUT VAN HEERDEN ADDED THAT THE AG WOULD NOT SCRAP THE PRESENT ARRANGEMENT.

5. TAYLOR SAID THAT IF THE LETTER AND SPIRIT OF THE PROPOSAL WAS TO BE CARRIED OUT, THE REGISTRATION PROCESS WOULD HAVE TO BE CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 PRETOR 04566 081714Z

SUBJECT TO A COMPLETE REVIEW BY AHTISAARI. OTHER PARTIES IN THE TERRITORY, HE SAID, HAD OBJECTIONS TO CERTAIN PROVISIONS IN THE PRESENT PROCLAMATION AS WELL AS TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF IT TO DATE. THIS POINT WAS ARGUED AT LENGTH, WITH VAN HEERDEN INSISTING THAT OBJECTIONS TO THE CURRENT REGISTRATION CAMPAIGN COULD BE TAKEN CARE OF IN VARIOUS WAYS BUT THAT THE AG WOULD NOT PUT ASIDE ALL THAT HAD BEEN DONE IN THIS REGARD.

6. ACCORDING TO VAN HEERDEN, STEYN ALSO TOLD AHTISAARI THAT IT WAS IMPORTANT TO AIM FOR ELECTIONS BEFORE DECEMBER 31 THIS YEAR AND THAT IT WOULD BE NECESSARY TO TELESCOPE THE TIMETABLE IN THE PROPOSAL. TAYLOR AGAIN SAID THAT SUCH A DECISION WOULD BE SUBJECT TO AHTISAARI'S CONCURRENCE, BUT IT SEEMED APPARENT THAT THE PROVISION FOR A SEVEN-MONTH SCENARIO WAS OF MUCH MORE IMPORTANCE THAN THE DECEMBER 31 DATE. VAN HEERDEN, HOWEVER, REAFFIRMED THAT IT WAS HIS IMPRESSION THAT THERE WAS NO FLEXIBILITY ON THIS. HE EMPHASIZED THAT THE SAG WANTED A FIRM DATE FOR THE PROCESS TO BE COMPLETE. THE SAG FEARED THAT SWAPO WOULD CONTINUE TERRORIST ACTION AFTER THE PLAN WAS INITIATED AND CONSEQUENTLY, AS THERE WOULD BE NO VISIBLE PEACE, SOUTH AFRICAN FORCES WOULD REMAIN IN PLACE AND THE TIMETABLE WOULD BE INDEFINITELY POSTPONED.

7. VAN HEERDEN EMPHASIZED THAT IT WAS MOST IMPORTANT AT THE PRESENT MOMENT TO BUILD TRUST IN PRETORIA RATHER THAN IN WINDHOEK. SOME PEOPLE, HE SAID, ARE STILL PRESSING THE FOREIGN MINISTER ON THE ALLEGED UNRELIABILITY OF THE WEST. VAN HEERDEN ACKNOWLEDGED THE POINT THAT THERE WAS MISTRUST ON BOTH SIDES BUT WENT ON TO SAY THAT THERE WAS ONE PARTICULAR STORY WHICH WAS CIRCULATING AT THE CABINET LEVEL THAT HAD CAUSED SERIOUS CONCERN. THERE IS A REPORT THAT THE U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT HAS PAID EXPENSES AND PER DIEM TO SWAPO OFFICIALS VISITING THE UNITED STATES. THIS HAD ALLEGEDLY BEEN A REGULAR PRACTICE FOR SOME TIME. THE FOREIGN MINISTER, VAN HEERDEN SAID, WAS BEING BEARDED WITH THIS STORY AS EVIDENCE OF U.S. PARTIALITY FOR SWAPO. TAYLOR SAID THAT THIS STORY WAS A GREAT DISTORTION. HE EXPLAINED THAT THE CONTACT GROUP HAD PAID SWAPO'S EXPENSES TO THE NEW YORK PROXIMITY TALKS AND HAD PROVIDED CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 PRETOR 04566 081714Z

TRAVEL TO LUANDA ON THE BASIS THAT THESE MEETINGS WERE HELD AT THE CONTACT GROUP'S INITIATIVE.

8. VAN HEERDEN INSISTED THAT THE STORY AS HE HEARD IT, WAS BASED ON DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE; THE PAYMENTS TO SWAPO WERE ALLEGEDLY IN THE U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT BUDGET. VAN HEERDEN MADE SOME REFERENCE TO A CONGRESSIONAL SOURCE. TAYLOR ASSURED HIM AGAIN THAT THIS STORY WAS NOT TRUE. VAN HEERDEN URGED THAT ON A HIGHER LEVEL SOME U.S. OFFICIAL TELEPHONE A CLARIFICATION OF THIS ISSUE TO AN APPROPRIATE SOUTH AFRICAN COUNTERPART.

9. VAN HEERDEN SAID THAT THE JOINT COMMITTEES AGREED TO AT YESTERDAY'S MEETING WOULD BE SEEING THE POLITICAL PARTIES TOMORROW, AUGUST 9. SUBSEQUENTLY, AHTISAARI WOULD BE TRAVELLING AROUND THE TERRITORY. THUS, THERE WILL VERY LIKELY NOT BE ANOTHER MEETING BETWEEN STEYN AND AHTISAARI UNTIL NEXT WEEK. THE AG, VAN HEERDEN REPORTED, HAD CANCELLED HIS TALK AT WITS UNIVERSITY SCHEDULED FOR TOMORROW (PRETORIA 4561). INSTEAD, STEYN WILL BE COMING TO PRETORIA ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 10, TO BRIEF THE PRIME MINISTER. EDMONDSON

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